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PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLN RUEHLZ
RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHAH #0200 0390959
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 080959Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0236
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3353
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1169
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1037
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1606
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2197
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0717

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000200

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL
USAID/W FOR EE/AA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: "NEW REVIVAL" COVERAGE REPLACES
NIGHTLY "RUHNAME" READING

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (U) Throughout former President Niyazov's tenure, Turkmenistan television's Altyn Asyr channel nightly broadcast a reading of Niyazov's "Ruhnama" before the 9:00 pm news. Two or three presenters would read from the "Ruhnama" (and, after finishing the first volume, "Ruhnama II") for about 10 minutes. Once the presenters completed the second volume of "Ruhnama," they would then start reading again the first volume. This practice continued during President Berdimuhamedov's first year in office.

¶3. (U) At the beginning of February, the TV presenters completed "Ruhnama II." Instead of beginning again with readings of "Ruhnama I," Turkmenistan television started showing video montages of President Berdimuhamedov's activities, including his trips to the provinces, his meetings with farmers in their modest yurts, his visits to military camps and Turkmenistan's gleaming oil refineries -- and all his other "government for the people" activities in support of his "Great New Revival."

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: This is yet another indication that the cult of "Ruhnama" is continuing to fade. The disappearance was always considered to be a matter of time. Berdimuhamedov had no personal stake in continuing to promote his successor's "sacred book." Some, however, have suggested that to do so suddenly, without introducing a new, alternate ideology, could be potentially destabilizing. Berdimuhamedov has used the "New Revival" term to refer to his administration's policies for some time now, and recently defined it as an "ideology." Naturally, he may feel that inculcating the ideals of the "Great New Revival" may be more important than keeping alive the now-dated thoughts of a predecessor whose policies he is trying to reverse. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND